

## Outdoors health tips from the Posse

# Going green camping



**Mark Rackay**  
Tips from the Posse

We all have a responsibility to try and conserve our ever-diminishing natural resources and clean up the environment we live in. Those of us who are outdoor people must work harder to be good stewards of the wilderness areas and woods that we love so much.

When it comes to “going green” I somehow think we may be heading down the wrong track. Perhaps we should not try and tackle the whole problem all at once. Maybe it is better if we just work to take care of “our own little corner of the world.” Just changing the way you do things, and thinking about what you do and how it will affect the environment is a great place to start.

I was up on Love Mesa this past fall, near Bear Pen, enjoying an ATV ride and a pretty good hike. While I was exploring an area by a small creek, I came across a campsite. The site was probably a week old.

The people who left this site were clearly the biggest slob on Earth. The area was strewn with beer cans, soda cans, wrappers, cigarette butts and every other piece of garbage. After seeing this repulsive mess, I could only imagine what their house must look like.

My wife and I cleaned the mess as best we could. I think a forest fire might not have been enough to sterilize this mess, but it did prompt me to think about “green camping,” and share a few thoughts with you.

Camping is a wonderful experience, giving participants a chance to get next to nature and live off the land. Whether the trip is for hunting, fishing or just a getaway, the rules remain the same. Leave nothing behind except your footprints, and sometimes not even those.

Start with a review of your camping equipment, and keeping in mind the sustainability of products. Look for products that are made from recycled materials. Also, look for products that are bisphenol A, (BPA) free. BPA is known to cause environmental problems and is dangerous to wildlife.

Pack your equipment in reusable containers, avoiding anything that must be discarded. Keep food in coolers that are bear resistant. A hungry bear can shred a cooler in seconds if he thinks there is food inside.



**Camping with an RV can be done to leave a minimal impact on the environment, and doing so will help preserve our precious outdoor lifestyle.** (Submitted photo/Colorado Parks and Wildlife)

Any food containers should be free of BPA or phthalates. These chemicals can leak into your food. Look for containers that are compact and spill proof.

Choose a tent that is made from recycled materials. Be aware of the materials that are used for waterproofing. You will want to look for solvent-free polyurethane coatings and nontoxic dyes.

There is a new tent being developed, called the solar tent. The solar tent uses a fabric that catches the sun's energy. It comes with wireless charging pouches that allow you to charge your devices through magnetic induction. There is even a tent light you can turn on through a message sent from your smartphone.

Many folks like to cook over an open fire. While this choice is preferable to a gas stove, a small green stove that efficiently burns wood is a better choice. They have the same output of heat as a gas stove.

Stay away from the lanterns that use propane or white gas. Not only are these lanterns not eco-friendly, but they are bulky as well. Solar lanterns have come a long way over the years and they are much brighter and longer lasting than the ones of just a few years ago. Hang the lamp on a tree branch during the day to charge, and it will be ready to light your camp during the evening hours.

I come across campsites all the time, where the campers have brought along cases of water in disposable bottles. All those battles have to be lugged out as trash when they are empty. A better choice is to use large water containers. I have a number of 1-gallon jugs that I use, and for longer trips, I carry 5-gallon jugs.

Take your children along on the camping trips. Not only is it a great time to teach them outdoors skills, it is an opportunity to educate them about our environment. Remember, they are the next generation to become the

stewards of our wilderness areas.

The rule is to leave your campsite in a better state than when you found it. Return the grounds and landscape back to the natural state and pick up all your garbage.

When it comes to just leaving behind your footprints, please tread lightly. Wear soft-soled shoes to minimize the disturbance to the land and plants beneath you. They were there first.

We inherited these beautiful mountains. The woods, waters and wilderness areas are the reason we live in Western Colorado. Let's all be good stewards and make it a better place than when we found it. ●

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